

Picture the typical bat -- It flies with its fingers. It crawls across rocky walls with its thumbs. It hangs by its feet upside down to sleep by day. It catches food in the dark of the night!

In Utah, bats feed only on insects, but there are many bats in the world that feed on fruit and nectar. (A few bats even eat frogs, mice, birds and fish. And, of course, the vampire bats make a small cut in their prey in order to lap up some blood.)

As scientists studied bats and learned where they lived and what they ate, they often identified them by giving them names that described how the bats looked. ***For example, what do you think a hognosed bat looks like? A spotted bat? A flying fox bat?***

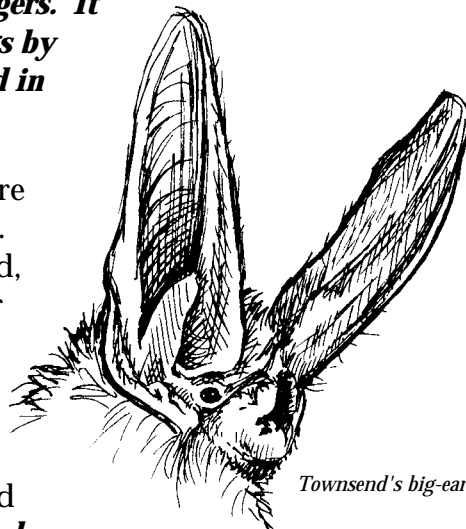
After you study bats, read the names below of some of the bats you might see in Utah. Close your eyes and imagine what these bats could look like -- picture them flying overhead and catching insects.

- small-footed bat
- Allen's big-eared bat
- big free-tailed bat
- long-eared bat
- red bat
- silver-haired bat
- little brown bat
- cave bat
- fringed bat

An animal's physical characteristics help it to survive. Take a close look at some bats that use echolocation to find their prey. Those strange-looking nose flaps help them direct the high-pitched sounds that they send; and the large ears help them receive the returning sound waves. Even inside their ears, there are special grooves to guide the sound. Bats have other interesting adaptations that help them to live. Can you identify some of these?



spear-nosed bat



Townsend's big-eared bat

Now you have the chance to design your own bat -- one that you're going to make up completely. ***Give it a name that describes how it looks. Also be ready to tell the class what your bat eats and where it lives.***

Draw your bat on a separate sheet of paper and make it life size. Hang it in your classroom to remind you how unique these flying mammals really are!